Transnational Education: a Concept for Institutional and Individual Perspectives (Editorial)

Carnicer, Javier A.; Fürstenau, Sara

Transnational Education. A Concept for Institutional and Individual Perspectives

Javier A. Carnicer, Sara Fürstenau

The works presented in this issue invoke the term 'transnational education' to reflect the ways in which education is being affected by, but also influencing, social processes that transcend national borders. The concept is shaped by very different research perspectives in various disciplines, and there is no consistent definition. Rather than trying to offer conclusive definitions, the authors of this special issue present their own research in areas like language education (*Galina Putjata*), forced migration (*Frauke Meyer*), education in colonialism (*Sylvia Kesper-Biermann*) and higher education (*Johanna L. Waters*). That way, they contribute to expanding the concept of transnational education. In these introducing pages, we would like to briefly outline some of the sources that frame the concept of transnationalism in educational research. We do not pretend to offer a comprehensive revision of the existing literature, but intend to point out some initial stages of the perspectives taken in this special issue.

The term 'Transnational Education' has been coined by the UNESCO to designate the offshore provision of educational programmes (*UNESCO/Council of Europe* 2001). Studies under this label focus mainly on higher education. Besides, there is a growing amount of research on international schools, which are usually private (*Hayden/Thompson* 2016). These institutions are only accessible to socially and economically privileged groups that posses the resources to enter a global educational market (*Adick* 2018). There they acquire a symbolic capital that appears much more difficult to obtain in the public educational institutions of national states. In this way, the transnationalisation of education contributes to a "redefinition of educational advantage", fostering new social inequalities between those that do and those that do not have access to the transnational educational market (*van Zanten* et al. 2015).

Transnational mobility and education are often seen through different lenses depending on the social context. In the case of students who attend international private schools, participate in exchange programmes and take international university courses, transnational mobility is viewed, and encouraged, as an educational strategy (*Brooks/Waters* 2011, p. 10). In underprivileged contexts, however, transnational mobility is more often labelled as 'migration' and linked to issues of 'integration' and educational disadvantage. In recent years, international student mobility has begun to be examined

Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung/
Discourse. Journal of Childhood and Adolescence Research Heft 4-2019, S. 385-389 https://doi.org/10.3224/diskurs.v14i4.01

also through the lens of transnational migration research (*Brooks/Waters* 2011; *King/ Raghuram* 2013; *Bilecen/Van Mol* 2017). But with regard to families and young people below the middle classes, we know little about how educational aspirations and strategies influence their decisions to migrate, and how this might impact on transnational social spaces (*Fürstenau* 2015, p. 74; see also *Carnicer* 2018, 2019; *Fürstenau* 2019). In general, and regardless of the social context, the fields beyond universities and international private schools remain a blank spot on the map of transnational education. This includes public schools, vocational training as well as informal and non-formal educational settings (*Adick* 2018).

In Germany, transnational perspectives on education arise from two different sources: Transnational migration research and transnational history. These approaches defy the implicit assumption of the nation as the unit of analysis, which is widely shared in the social sciences. In educational research, this rupture with 'methodological nationalism' (*Wimmer/Schiller* 2003) appears of particular relevance, because the formation of school institutions is linked to nation-building processes, and formal education is to this day still considered a task of the nation state. As a result, educational science has perhaps a stronger national character than other disciplines. At the same time, the imaginary of nation states relies on cultural homogeneity, and schools play a significant role in its construction (*Adick* 2005, p. 244f.; *Krüger-Potratz* 2005, p. 63-66). Because of this, transnational migration research appears of double relevance for intercultural education: as a particular approach to understand migration, but also as a contestation of the traditional 'nationalistic' attitude of school systems towards cultural diversity. The *Interkulturelle Erziehungswissenschaft* is indeed, alongside Comparative Education and Educational History, one of the areas most receptive to transnationalism within educational research in Germany.

In migration research, the transnational perspective arose as an attempt to understand "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (*Basch* et al. 1994, p. 8). The objective was to capture the living conditions of underprivileged migrants who became part of the workforce in global capitalism. In doing this, the transnational perspective describes novel social realities that emerge from the links between different societies woven by migrants: "transnational fields of action and meaning" that operate "within and between continuing nation-states" (*Glick Schiller* et al. 1992, p. 19). In Germany, sociologists like *Thomas Faist* and *Ludger Pries* engaged in the development of a concept of *transnational social spaces*, denoting "a circular flow of persons, goods, information and symbols across countries that has been triggered in the course of international labor migration and refugee flows" (*Faist* 1998, p. 214).

This idea of flows and relations giving rise to transnational social spaces was received in educational discourse in Germany, and soon a concept of 'transnational educational spaces' (*Transnationale Bildungsräume*) was in use. In 2004, a special issue of the Journal *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* appeared (*Gogolin/Sander* 2004; *Gogolin/Pries* 2004; *Fürstenau* 2004) and subsequent works have taken up the concept (*Adick* 2005; *Kesper-Biermann* et al. 2018; *Küppers* et al. 2016; *Hornberg* 2012). Concepts of 'educational spaces' and 'educational landscapes' are being discussed in *History of Education* as well. *Kesper-Biermann* (2016) proposed to understand these spaces as emerging and consolidating "themselves by relations, interactions and perceptions" through practices of a very diverse range of state and non-state actors – from

governments, public institutions and their members to teachers and "those demanding educational opportunities for themselves or for others" (p. 93). With this concept, the Transnational History of Education shows how the emergence of national education systems during the 19th century was, despite national interests, accompanied by an intensive "communication and mutual observation of education experts and institutions across national borders" (*Möller/Wischmeyer* 2013, p. 7). *Kesper-Biermann* (in this issue) further shows how educational institutions served the colonisation overseas, contributing to national expansionism.[1]

Concepts like 'transnational education' or 'transnational educational spaces' are not simply designations for certain phenomena. Above all, they relate to particular perspectives that lead researchers to discover or construct the phenomena they designate. Like most of the research labelled 'transnational', the works presented in this issue share rather a perspective than a particular subject. Based on empirical research, they expand the concept of transnational education by showing and describing some of the many educational processes, contexts, organisations, institutions and agents that contribute to a "transnationalisation of the social world" (*Pries* 2008). In this way, they shed light on educational issues that were often veiled by methodological nationalism.

With a focus on language use and language education, *Galina Putjata* analyses the individual perspectives and experiences of transnational children. The children whose voices are heard in her qualitative explorative study have migrated themselves and now attend a school in a big German city that is open to their experiences. This multireligious school has a focus on children from Jewish families; 45 percent of the children have an immigrant background, many speak Russian and Hebrew. Both of these languages as well as 'German as a second language' are part of the school curriculum. By drawing on language portraits and group discussions with the children and by involving the children as 'researchers', *Putjata* investigates the legitimacy (*Bourdieu*) of multilingual language practices in the children's transnational lifeworld and educational institution. Her findings point to the significance of the educational environment, in this case a school where multilingualism seems normal. According to the children's reports, multilingual teachers represent role models, fostering linguistic practices that match the transnational educational institution.

To include non-formal and informal education into the concept of transnational education is an important concern in *Frauke Meyer's* contribution. *Frauke Meyer* presents two qualitative case studies that illustrate educational processes (*Bildungsprozesse*) in the course of forced migration. She adopts a postcolonial perspective and points to power relations that shape the educational trajectories of youth that seek asylum in Germany and have an unsteady residential status. It becomes clear that even though transnational practices are an important part of these youth's lives, their trajectories are subject to exclusive national border regimes, which limits their access to formal education. Referring to the discussion on the conceptualization of *Bildung*, the analysis calls attention to educational processes (*Bildungsprozesse*) that take place under transnational conditions in the context of forced migration. Under such conditions, learning and acquiring knowledge in non-formal and informal contexts becomes extremely important for the youth in order to grow and to develop opportunities and perspectives for the future. The contribution illustrates how a postcolonial approach to analysis may lead to recognition of such educational processes.

Based on the case study of the German Colonial School Witzenhausen, *Sylvia Kesper-Biermann* offers a historical perspective on transnational education. The Colonial

School trained young German men for a life overseas, especially in the German colonies. As *Kesper-Biermann* shows, the school was driven by ideals of 'world education' based on the superiority of German and European culture, and combined exploitation with a 'civilising' mission. Shedding light on this colonial precursor, *Kesper-Biermann* points to the significance of asymmetries and hierarchies of power in contemporary conceptions and realisations of transnational education. The historical approach in this article is two-fold: From the perspective of a transnational history of education, the work shows how cross-border relations and entanglements in education contributed to stabilising the nation. But at the same time, by depicting continuities that date back to colonialism, the article contributes to a history of transnational education.

In her essay (*Kurzbeitrag*), *Johanna L. Waters* reflects on the transgressive potential of transnational higher education and urges to bring geography back into the discussion in order to realise this potential. She focuses on international branch campuses, which represent a significant, growing global industry. She criticises that – a common problem in the context of 'globalisation' – this industry is discussed merely with regard to flows of commodities and services. Transnational education is mostly viewed as a 'neutral' and unproblematic transfer of skills, knowledge and understandings. This view, *Waters* states, ignores the particularities and the cultural distinctiveness of the distant places where the campuses are established. The author shows that it is not just an intellectual, but also an ethical imperative to reflect geographical differences and their implications, since universities have an ethical responsibility to engage with the implications of their transnational endeavours. Only when meeting this imperative, *Waters* argues, scholars and practitioners can realise the potential of transnational education by disrupting established ways of thinking and creating new political, social and cultural geographies.

Endnotes

1 For a discussion of current concepts and research in Transnational History of Education see *Fuchs/Roldán Vera* (2019).

References

Adick, C. (2005): Transnationalisierung als Herausforderung für die International und Interkulturell Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft. Tertium comparationis, 11, 2, pp. 243-269. https://doi.org/10.1080/21931674.2018.1463057

Adick, C. (2018): Transnational education in schools, universities, and beyond: Definitions and research areas. Transnational Social Review, 8, 2, p. 124-138.

Basch, L./Schiller, N./Szanton Blanc, C. (1994): Nations unbound. Transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments, and deterritorialized nation-states. – Langhorne.

Bilecen, B./Van Mol, C. (2017): Introduction: international academic mobility and inequalities. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 43, 8, pp. 1241-1255. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1300225

Brooks, R./Waters, J. L. (2011): Student Mobilities, Migration and the Internationalization of Higher Education. – Houndmills/Basingstoke/Hampshire.

Carnicer, J. A. (2018): Transnational Family and Educational Trajectories. Transnational Social Review, 8, 2, pp. 170-184. https://doi.org/10.1080/21931674.2018.1463056

Carnicer, J. A. (2019): Transnational migration and educational opportunities. A case study of migration from Brazil to Germany. London Review of Education, 17, 1, pp. 14-25.

Faist, T. (1998): Transnational social spaces out of international migration: evolution, significance and future prospects. European Journal of Sociology, 39, 2, pp. 213-247. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975600007621

Fuchs, E./Roldán Vera, E. (Eds.) (2019): The transnational in the history of education. Concepts and perspectives. – Cham.

Fürstenau, S. (2004): Transnationale (Aus-)Bildungs- und Zukunftsorientierungen. Ergebnisse einer Untersuchung unter zugewanderten Jugendlichen portugiesischer Herkunft. Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft, 7, 1, pp. 33-57.

Fürstenau, S. (2015): Transmigration und transnationale Familien. Neue Perspektiven der Migrationsforschung als Herausforderung für die Schule. In: *Leiprecht, R./Steinbach*, A. (Eds.): Schule in der Migrationsgesellschaft. Ein Handbuch, Band 1: Grundlagen – Diversität – Fachdidaktiken. – Schwalbach, pp. 143-165. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11618-019-00882-4

Fürstenau, S. (2019): Educational aspirations of underpriveleged female migrants. An ethnographic case study of a transnational network of care workers between Brazil and Germany. In: *Gogolin, I./Maaz, K.* (Eds.): Migration und Bildungserfolg. – Wiesbaden.

Glick Schiller, N./Basch, L./Blanc-Szanton, C. (1992): Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration. In: *Glick Schiller, N./Basch, L./Blanc-Szanton*, C. (Eds.): Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 645, 1.

Gogolin, I./Pries, L. (2004): Stichwort: Transmigration und Bildung. Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft, 7, 1, pp. 5-19. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11618-004-0002-4

Gogolin, I./Sander, U. (2004): Editorial. Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft, 7, 1, pp. 3-4.

Hayden, M./Thompson, J. (Eds.) (2016): International Schools: Current Issues and Future Prospects. No. 2 in Oxford Studies in Comparative Education. – Oxford.

Hornberg, S. (2012): Transnationale Bildungsräume im staatlichen Schulsystem. Tertium Comparationis, 18, 1, pp. 108-127.

Kesper-Biermann, S. (2016): Putting the Nation in Perspective: Educational Spaces – a Concept for the Historiography of Education. International Journal for the Historiography of Education, 6, 1, pp. 92-95.

Kesper-Biermann, S./Leung, M. W. H./Nethi, V./Somalingam, T. (2018): Transnational education: teaching and learning across borders. An introduction. Transnational Social Review, 8, 2, pp. 116-123.

King, R./Raghuram, P. (2013): International Student Migration: Mapping the Field and New Research Agendas. Population, Space and Place, 19, 2, pp. 127-137.

Krüger-Potratz, M. (2005): Interkulturelle Bildung. Eine Einführung. – Münster.

Küppers, A./Pusch, B./Uyan Semerci, P. N. (Eds.) (2016): Bildung in transnationalen Räumen: Education in transnational spaces. – Wiesbaden.

Möller, E./Wischmeyer, J. (2013): Transnationale Bildungsräume – Koordinaten eines Forschungskonzepts. In: *Möller, E./Wischmeyer, J.* (Eds.): Transnationale Bildungsräume: Wissenstransfers im Schnittfeld von Kultur, Politik und Religion – volume 96 of *Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz Beihefte*, pp. 7-20.

Pries, L. (2008): Die Transnationalisierung der sozialen Welt: Sozialräume jenseits von Nationalgesellschaften. – Frankfurt a.M.

UNESCO/Council of Europe (2001): Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee at its second meeting, Riga, 6 June 2001).

van Zanten, A./Ball, S. J./Darchy-Koechlin, B. (Eds.) (2015): Elites, privilege and excellence: the national and global redefinition of educational advantage. World Yearbook of Education 2015. – London.

Wimmer, A./Schiller, N. G. (2003): Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology 1. International Migration Review, 37, 3, pp. 576-610.